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Chair

Mr. Gordon Brown

Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage

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• (0845)

[English]

The Chair (Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC)): Good morning, everyone.

We'll call to order meeting number five of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage. We're doing a study on Canada's preparations for the 2014 Sochi Olympics and for the Paralympics, also to be held in Sochi.

Today we have three witnesses who are going to present to us for eight minutes each.

We will start with Mr. Lindsay from Biathlon Canada, for eight minutes.

Mr. Christopher Lindsay (Director, High Performance, Biathlon Canada): Chairman and honourable members of the committee, thank you for this opportunity this morning.

A biathlon is a sport that receives very little attention in Canada. Elsewhere in the world biathlon is a major spectacle that fills cold stadiums with 30,000 plus animated spectators. Once every four years Canadians get an opportunity to see our national team perform. This provides a vital but limited window upon a dedicated group of athletes who are focused 24-7, 365 days of the year on performing a perfect race.

Biathlon is all about the relentless pursuit of perfection. An athlete can ski the fastest but miss their last target and lose the race. The very next day the same athlete can shoot perfectly, but not ski fast enough to win. Even leaving with a medal around your neck is no guarantee that a performance was truly perfect. Biathletes obsess about how to get closer to this mission.

I'll provide a few quick facts about Biathlon Canada. We are the second-smallest winter Olympic sport organization in this country. Our participant base is made up of both civilian and cadet biathlon. Many young Canadians are exposed to low-level biathlon through the cadet program, but the transition from participation-based cadet biathlon to competition-based civilian is challenging due to the limited resources of many cadet families. Ultimately the majority of our national team come from a start in cross-country skiing. There are more than 50 biathlon clubs across the country and many of these clubs are integrated or partnered with larger cross-country ski clubs.

International biathlon is serious business. It is ranked as one of the most popular winter sports in Europe by TV audiences, magazines, fan clubs, trading cards, live broadcasts, and intense media scrutiny.

Biathlon has 27 medals available at Sochi. When biathlon and cross-country medals are counted together, they account for 40% of the total medals available. In Vancouver, Canada won none of these medals despite coming quite close. Canadians have had success in biathlon in the past. Myriam Bédard was a world champion and three-time Olympic medal winner with a bronze in Albertville and two golds in Lillehammer. Unfortunately, Biathlon Canada was unable to capitalize on or repeat this success.

In Vancouver we finished the games with a top-six result. We want to improve on this for Sochi. This season Biathlon Canada has two distinct goals. The first is to put an athlete on the podium. The second is to try to prepare the next generation of athletes for future success. Today I will speak specifically about our Sochi preparations. Our goals for Sochi are simple. We are doing everything we can to put an athlete on the podium. Achieving secondary goals will validate increased program strength, but will not contribute to the overall Team Canada performance at the Olympics. With our performance partners we have targeted support for our athletes. This strategy involved identifying a group of potential athletes eight to twelve years in advance, and each year challenging them to become faster, more accurate, and more dedicated.

Biathlon Canada is heavily dependent on governmental support. This has meant that our plans have been adjusted as our performance partners target resources according to their unique and sometimes uncoordinated efforts. In the pre-Olympic season we won our first World Cup gold medal in 20 years, and collectively our team had its best-ever world championship performance.

To improve our athletes we focused on several strategic programs and methods. In preparation for the 2010 Olympics we shared a special treadmill with Speed Skating Canada. This meant driving an hour to the Olympic Oval for training in Calgary, and then driving another hour back to our training centre in Canmore. Thanks to the investment from OTP and WinSport, we have a new ski treadmill in Canmore for our use.

OTP has supported the development of our biathlon shooting lab, which uses pressure sensors and motion sensors to help improve our shooting accuracy.

We use a walk-in refrigerator, where we are able to simulate extreme weather conditions while doing ammunition testing. This is actually done at a decommissioned tunnel that was built for the 1988 Calgary Olympic Games.

• (0850)

We expose our athletes to altitude training at specific times during the training cycle, to improve their cardiovascular performance. WinSport Canada has provided access to the Beckie Scott high-altitude training centre on the Haig Glacier.

Training at an altitude of 2,700 metres is only an hour's drive and a 10-minute helicopter ride away from Canmore. Unfortunately, we can't shoot during our multiple three- to four-day stays on the glacier, so for more comprehensive training, we went back to Park City, Utah, and to Dachstein, Austria, for sustained altitude and high-low-high-low training.

To assist our national team staff, we invited several world-class coaches and researchers to our national training centre, for insight into strength, recovery, technique, and shooting. OTP and the Canadian Sport Institute, Calgary, supported this initiative to help us build our own pool of Nordic experts that will be a key factor in sustained success, post-games.

Our preparation has been focused on optimizing performance. We believe we have maximized what we can with the resources provided, but it has not been perfect. We have several challenges, heading into the games. The gradual reduction in our high-performance money has led to dropping support programs and increasing costs to our athletes. Having no funds directly targeting the next generation of athletes will be a major hurdle for us going forward.

One side effect of Canada's funding system is that Nordic sports are disadvantaged in the current funding formulas. The one-size-fits-all standard prioritizes for winter sports but it does not control for Nordic sports' larger field sizes, opportunities for multiple medals by the same athletes, and the greater developmental time required to produce medal winners.

In spite of the challenges, we are very proud of the success we have had. Last season, Jean-Philippe Le Guellec won Canada's first World Cup gold medal. It was our first medal since 2007 and our first gold medal since 1994.

We have several advantages going into the games. Our focused use of technology has improved our ability to provide feedback and analysis, without creating additional work for our staff. Thanks to a comprehensive athlete tracking system, we know more about our Canadian athletes and more about how they compare to the world's best. As well, the elevation of Sochi is nearly identical to that of our Canmore national training centre. This will reduce the time needed for our athletes to acclimatize. With our extensive research into snow conditions, pre-Vancouver, we are world leaders in dealing with near-zero temperatures and heavy and unexpected snowfall, which we expect at the games.

The Chair: Mr. Lindsay, I'm going to have to put an end to your presentation now, but you will have an opportunity to expand on it in the questioning.

We'll move now, for eight minutes, to Steven Hills, the executive director of the Canada Snowboard Federation.

Mr. Hills, go ahead.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Steven Hills (Executive Director, Canada Snowboard Federation): Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

[*English*]

Thank you.

I appreciate the opportunity to come here today to speak to you about our preparation for Sochi. Canada Snowboard, I'm proud to say, does enjoy a lot of attention in Canada, and in the media, and in the action sports world.

We are the governing body for the sport of snowboarding in Canada. Our mission is to lead snowboarding from park to podium. That word "park" refers to the snow parks that exist at the resorts where young athletes, young kids, begin their long-term athletic development pathway, learning to snowboard and getting excited about being on the hill.

Our vision is for Canada to be recognized as the world-leading snowboard nation. I believe we've effectively achieved that. We consistently win the most medals on the FIS Snowboard World Cup as well as the World Snowboard Tour. Last year we won an aggregate of 54 medals, which placed us in the top rank when you aggregate the pro and traditional tour models. But we're also recognized for our world-leading sport development programs. That's our training for coaches, judges, officials, and it's shared and copied around the world, which is a point of pride for us. We also host and deliver some of the best World Cup competitions, as many as any other nation does.

All of that is thanks to the federal government. Our largest single funder is the federal government, and I thank all of you for supporting that.

We're also very fortunate to have a number of performance partners. We are grateful to Sport Canada for their investment through the OTP recommendations. We also were assisted by the international single sport hosting program, which is supported by the government to allow us to hold World Cups where our young athletes can get World Cup experience at home in Canada.

OTP, the Canadian Olympic Committee, and the Canadian Sport Institute are critical to our overall preparation for major games and our athletes in general. There are other valuable groups like B2ten. You will hear JD Miller speak about some of the efforts they are supporting in national sports.

Our corporate partners are an important part of this. Unfortunately, after the 2010 games, sponsor fatigue caused a reduction in funding directly to NSOs. This is a critical problem. The resources from those corporate partners are the resources we rely on to invest in the next generation of athletes. This is a problem we really need to work on.

We want to thank the provincial governments for their matching support for the international hosting program.

How did Canada Snowboard get to 2014? It's been a long way since Nagano in 1998. We won our first gold medal there. Many of you may remember those games and the controversy surrounding that gold medal.

At the Salt Lake games and the Torino games, we had tremendous success. We came close to the podium, winning one medal in Torino in 2006, a proud medal. But our success really came together with the investment leading to Vancouver, and that came through the creation of OTP and the increased funding from the federal government. We were always a great group of snowboarders on the world stage, but through OTP and that investment we became a great group of athletes supported by some of the best coaches in the world.

In 2010, we won three medals: two gold, one silver. It put us second to the U.S. In 2010 there were three medal events. In 2014 there are five medal events in snowboarding, with 30 medal opportunities. Our goal for Sochi is to win five medals. That's a big goal, and we're very confident we can do it.

Snowboarding will also be making its debut in the 2014 Paralympics for the first time. We have an athlete, a former world champion, on our roster. He competed in the 2010 games as a para-Nordic athlete. He has a shot at it, but in the 2014 games there's no factoring—they won't be factoring the level of disability of the athlete. So it will be difficult, but we have a shot.

So how are we prepared, and what is the evidence we can meet our medal goals? In fact, we're well on our way to qualify our full quota of 24 athletes for the games, and we could qualify as many as 26 athletes, which means we might end up leaving a couple of athletes behind. Twenty-four athletes represents 11% of the entire Canadian team so there is going to be a large group of snowboarders at the games, with 10 coaches and 15 medical and technical support staff. It's no small mission to put together.

Last year was a record year for our medal count. One of the major indicators for success at the games is performance at the world championships.

● (0855)

We were fortunate enough, with the support of the federal government and the Quebec governments, to host the world championships here in Canada. It's about a five-year process to bring the world championships to any nation. We tied for first place with Finland, at four medals. Although we only won four medals at those games, we also won two at the X Games. The X Games is a big pro event and it's almost considered a higher level of competition.

We currently have six top-five athletes, including two world champions and one X Games champion, going into the games, and I believe our team is as well prepared as we possibly can be.

Through your investment, our summer dryland and non-snow training camp program was the most comprehensive it's ever been. I've only been around as executive director since 2010, but spent 10 years working alongside Snowboard before that, so I can attest to the preparation of the dryland program this summer.

The entire team is free of injury, and fitness testing has proven that as a group our team is the fittest it has ever been. Your investment has allowed us to build replica courses that we'll be using in Sochi. We're fortunate that the builders who built the Vancouver courses, and are building the Sochi courses, are Canadians. They're good friends of ours, and they build us training courses and practice courses around the world on glaciers. That's not by accident.

We're also fortunate the top judges in the world are Canadians. It doesn't mean we have any ability to influence the judging, but we certainly have access to their expertise and their knowledge of the systems. That's also not by accident.

Your investment will allow us to host three Olympic and two Paralympic World Cup events here in Canada, leading to the games. The world's best will be in Lake Louise, Alberta, in late December, and in Quebec City in January, after which we'll announce our team formally.

The last piece of our preparation is familiarization. I can't say enough about this. The Canadian Olympic Committee, through their support and your investment, has allowed us to be on the ground in Sochi with our snow sport peers figuring out that very challenging environment, and I assure you it is a very challenging environment. I'm very confident that the level of preparation on the ground in Sochi that the Canadian Olympic Committee has will rival any nation in the world.

Your investments also allowed us to become recognized as one of the best organized snowboard nations in the world. We spend a lot of time with our peers at the International Ski Federation meetings, and we compare notes. And we're often compared to the Swiss. I don't mind that comparison.

In closing, to be at my eight minutes here, I want to thank you again, the federal government, for your help in our preparation. I remind you of one thing. Not only will our athletes stepping on the podium be a great source of pride, but this is an important economic driver. The ski and snowboard resort business in Canada is significant, and having a whole new generation of champions and role models, excitement and enthusiasm after the games, I hope and expect, will continue to drive people to the hills to enjoy what I enjoy, playing in the snow.

Thank you very much for your time today, and I look forward to your questions a little later.

● (0900)

The Chair: Great job.

Thank you very much, Mr. Hills.

We'll now move to JD Miller, president of B2ten, for eight minutes.

Mr. JD Miller (President, B2ten): *Bonjour.* Good morning. *Zdrastvuyte.*

Thank you for the opportunity of being invited to appear here today.

I sit before you as a private citizen who believes in the positive impact of sport on society. For those not familiar with B2ten, we were formed out of necessity some 10 years ago to provide athletes a best-case scenario for success. Today, B2ten continues the aforementioned activities and invests in the development of professionals in key areas where insufficient availability exists. These programs are privately funded, making B2ten the largest funder of high-performance sport that is independent of the sports system.

[*Translation*]

Our independence gives us a unique outlook on the sports system, free from political limitations, restrictions or bureaucracy.

Our endeavours are wide-ranging, from filling specific gaps to delivering fully integrated programs tailored to the physical, mental, technical and strategic needs of athletes.

[*English*]

Why do individuals across the country activate putting up tens of millions of dollars with no commercial quid pro quo? They do so because of their conviction that sport and sport achievement are an integral part of a healthy, dynamic society.

[*Translation*]

This morning, I will briefly speak to the following elements: athletes and their preparedness for Sochi, funding, expectations for Sochi and next steps.

[*English*]

Over the past 20 years I've had the opportunity to know many Olympians. To this day, I never cease to be amazed by their passion, drive, determination for excellence, and pride in country.

[*Translation*]

I would have a hard time coming up with any other activity in which you strive to become the best in the world and where pride in your achievement is considered reward enough.

Every athlete's story is unique. Each one is worthy of recognition, and every Olympic medal is priceless.

[*English*]

As you know, our Olympic athletes work incredibly hard. Yet hard work alone is not enough. One needs to work smart, using the latest in technology, tools, and training methods to push performance envelopes. It is this element of constantly pushing up against the limits of what is impossible that makes high performance so very expensive.

For the current winter quadrennial we are of the view that preparedness has moved a step forward under the guidance of Own the Podium.

Canada's national sport organizations have generally improved their delivery of training and preparation programs.

● (0905)

[*Translation*]

Logistics and organization are critical components when it comes to putting on the games, especially far from home, as with Sochi. With that in mind, Canada's Olympic committee deserves to be recognized for the unprecedented amount of resources it has committed to ensure Team Canada is well-supported.

[*English*]

Turning to finances, how easy it would have been to scale back funding post-Vancouver. The Government of Canada did not do so and should be congratulated for having stayed the course. A stable source of long-term funding is required to succeed in the high-performance arena.

While it is incumbent on our sport organizations to pursue further enhancements and efficiencies such that government investment can be used to the highest level, there remain a number of areas in which obtaining results is fundamentally financially constrained. A few examples would be talent ID, individualized training programs such as those being pursued in the U.S., attracting the world's best professionals, and an expedited move to gold-standard governance.

[*Translation*]

If we want to remain a leading medal contender in winter sports, Canadian society must play a bigger role. In particular, that includes additional funding for sports organizations to put towards athlete training and preparation. At B2ten, we are looking to extend our reach to the 2018 and 2020 Olympic games and to step up our efforts to engage other groups directly in sports.

[*English*]

Going forward, Canada will require greater activation and funding on the part of provincial governments. Without doing so, over time we can expect to see a lesser number of athletes and a lesser quality of athletes ascending to the international competition scene.

As to Sochi results for able-bodied athletes, we expect there to be a good deal to celebrate. When comparing events to 2010, using performance analytics, one can expect to see a similar medal total. One then needs to add in the new events that will be debuting in Sochi. Canada is expected to do well in these new events given its history as an effective early adopter—think short track, think aerials—and as mentioned by Steven, some of the new events emanate from the X Games culture in which Canadians have been actively involved for many years.

With these new events, Canada is expected to deliver a record number of medals. On the subject of gold medals, a decline is expected. As to finishing first in the overall standings, we do not see this result.

While there will be much to celebrate in Sochi, immediately around the corner lies a period of challenge. As such, we must not be complacent.

[*Translation*]

If Canada's goal is to improve or even maintain its current standing, stakeholders will have to act swiftly. To that end, some fundamental questions will need to be answered: which sports matter to Canadians, what Canada's objectives are and how success should be measured.

[*English*]

Only once this is done will stakeholders be able act with common purpose, something that is central to becoming our best. For the near term, this is a time of anticipation and excitement. Let us get out and cheer loudly for Canada come February. Let us also be aware that it is the time for stakeholders to address the future.

Thank you very much for your time.

I look forward to answering any questions that might come this way.

The Chair: Thank you, Mr. Miller.

We're now going to move to questioning. This round has seven minutes to each questioner.

We will start with Mr. Hillyer, for seven minutes.

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Thank you.

Mr. Miller, your organization is a charitable organization, but even though it's a charitable organization, your website says that you apply business-based principles to athlete development.

Can you just expand on that and maybe talk about whether or not those principles are applied just to companies and businesses who donate to your organization, or if they also apply to the athletes themselves?

• (0910)

Mr. JD Miller: No. Everything that B2ten has done is athlete-centred, Mr. Hillyer, and as such, we apply these principles in order to give athletes a best-case scenario for success.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Can you talk a little bit about a business principle that's involved in an amateur athlete preparing for the Olympics?

Mr. JD Miller: Certainly. Everything would start with purpose. So in other words, decisions are made based on the purpose. What is the purpose for this particular athlete and their program? If what is being done fits with the purpose, or what is being proposed fits with the purpose, we will do it. If not, we will cast it aside.

So this is a very businesslike approach: how to achieve a goal, what are the needs, what is missing, and then how to provide what is missing in a very sharp and pointed fashion in order that each athlete can be supported in order to reach their own personal service ceiling of performance.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Thank you.

You talked about the main motivation for donors to your organization as the understanding that excellence in sport is vital

for our society and for our country. But is there a business model that has a more tangible financial return for companies that might want to get involved in helping athletes?

Mr. JD Miller: I think that anybody who wishes to get involved with sport, which is part of health, or the environment or even education—three great needs—needs to be cognizant that this has to be a bit of a cocktail, which can be one part commercial and one part community service. I think if one enters the realm of providing a sponsorship agreement, as corporate Canada might to biathlon or to snowboard, to do so strictly for commercial reasons, it would be difficult to get a return on investment.

I think we all have a profound obligation to contribute to community, and this is what drives the members of B2ten to put up substantial amounts of money to help Canada succeed.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: You talked about the importance for governments to continue to invest in developing athletes if we want to continue to have success in future Olympics. But what are some ways beyond just dollars that governments can help?

Mr. JD Miller: It's very difficult for governments to provide resources without one of those critical resources being fuel, especially in the area of high performance. This is the most expensive area that exists in sport, probably akin to Formula One racing, where everybody is pushing against the limits of what is possible, and it's not merely a matter of providing funding, it's increasing funding.

If you're not increasing funding, you're falling behind the trailing edge. Governments obviously do have other things to operate, in terms of expertise and resources, whether it's the NRC or their legal department. As I mentioned, we view governance as the number one issue facing the sport system, and certainly there's a great number of lawyers in the Government of Canada and expertise available to upgrade the governance. There has to be a will to do so, however.

Mr. Jim Hillyer: Thank you.

Mr. Lindsay, biathlon.... I ski and I see that we don't have any trouble attracting people to snowboarding. I know there's probably not too much trouble getting people to cross-country ski. How big is biathlon itself, for people who don't want to do it competitively, just do it for fun?

• (0915)

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: Biathlon is an interesting situation, because it really only exists in a competitive arena at this point.

We have participatory programs at the low end, both through cadets and on the civilian side, whereby we are providing challenges beyond cross-country skiing that are effective for some populations of kids who are looking for something a little different.

Of course, we are dealing with a sport in which at some level you end up dealing with firearms, so you are already limiting yourself a little bit in your population because of both regulation and the general feeling around firearms in specific areas of the country and within specific demographic groups.

We're trying to push, on the technological side, towards using some of the technology we've developed in our shooting lab for testing high-performance athletes to bring the technology back down to the point at which we could provide biathlon as a sport for people without the stigma attached to firearms, using such things as what I'll call laser rifles in almost a laser-tag type of situation, because that's the type of technology people can understand, and bringing it down to the point of being able to reinforce participation starting right at eight years of age, with kids who are interested in a challenge other than just doing loops around the park.

We see this as a potential benefit, but we don't foresee in the next 10 years any change at the international level.

The Chair: Thank you very much. We'll have to move to—

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: I'm doing really well with my time today, am I not?

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Mr. Dubé, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My question is for Mr. Lindsay.

We have some concerns.

You talked about the limited resources for families transitioning from the cadet program to the civilian program. Actually, you didn't say a lot about it, and I'd like to know more.

A lot of funding goes to elite athletes, but consideration must also be given to the performance level they started at before reaching the elite mark.

Is that a problem, in your view? Basically, I'm singling out a sentence in your presentation. Perhaps you could elaborate on the subject.

[*English*]

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: The cadet program, which is run by the military, is a huge source of exposure to biathlon. Cadet units across the country have the opportunity to do biathlon as one of their optional fitness activities each year.

The cadet program is not terribly good at telling us how many people are exposed to biathlon, but looking at average cadet numbers from each of the land force areas, we estimate the number at between 3,500 to 4,000 young athletes who have exposure.

Unfortunately, the population who are involved in cadets tends to be from a lower income demographic. One of the challenges we have in biathlon is that as soon as you look to move outside of the cadet program, in which everything is provided directly to you—skis, boots, poles, and the rifle—and move into the civilian side, you need to provide all this equipment for yourself. That can be a very steep initial upgrade for people. Unfortunately it's not like triathlon, in which, if you want to do a triathlon, you can start out on your BMX bike and still participate.

The reality in biathlon currently is that we don't have distinct levels of technology that can get you up to using Olympic-calibre equipment. An athlete at age 16 anywhere in the world will go

immediately to the very same rifle system that is being used by the top people who compete. That means a \$4,000 investment. Of course, we need to be careful with such things as clubs owning rifles or getting grants to own rifles, because then you have an issue with who is in actual control of the rifle. This is generally an area that we just don't want to get into.

This is why I think that using some of the technology we have been able to put together in the shooting lab and finding ways to bring costs down so as to be able to put together a \$500 biathlon system would be a major boon for us.

● (0920)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: My other question has to do with development.

You talked about the hierarchical nature of funding for winter sports. This question is along the same lines as my first. We're concerned that we're allocating funds to a certain level of performance but perhaps disregarding lower levels. The system may not give enough consideration to sports that require more time to develop future medallists. Could you elaborate a bit on that?

[*English*]

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: The funding models in Canada are based primarily on two things: there is general participation across the country, and there is high-performance success. In sports such as ours, which are focused primarily on competition at the high end, we inevitably have fewer people who compete, compared with other sports. Everyone compares with hockey; none of our sports will ever become hockey.

The challenge I suggested in my presentation about the discrepancies among our funding partners is that often, in order to gain more results, we need to train more athletes and be able to reach out our identification of talent deeper into the Canadian population.

Unfortunately, as a sport that hasn't been able to crack into the medals regularly at the Olympics, certainly not for the last 20 years, we are not able to access any money to do that, and so the system tends to revolve around people who are performing and will then continue to put money into those sports to the detriment of other sports.

I have some sympathy for sports that are doing well. They should continue getting funding. I totally agree with that. However, when I look at the overall mission, particularly the mission of OTP, which is to try to win medals, if we're leaving 40% of the medals at the Winter Olympic Games off the table because we are not adequately funding those sports and are not making the long-term investments required for real progress, we will eventually get to a position in which we have a Canadian on every single podium but will still not have access to that 40% of the medals.

If that's what we are looking to do, then that's great. If it's not, then....

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Finally, I have a quick question for Mr. Hills.

You talked about going from the park to the podium. Do you have enough support at the park level to develop future Olympians?

[English]

Mr. Steven Hills: I missed some of that, but I understand your question as being whether we have support for developing future Olympians.

We are challenged. It has been a big challenge. Most of the resources we used to do this came from our corporate funding for investing in programming among the youth groups. We have funding from Sport Canada to develop programs and systems and models and to train judges and officials, but it doesn't go very deep. Most of our funding is directed at those athletes who are already at the high-performance level.

As Mr. Miller indicated, there is definitely a gap between our success in Sochi and what will occur in the future. We have invested a lot to do what we did in Vancouver for our success in Sochi. That is going to be at the expense of the next stage.

So this is a crisis, an issue that we're taking very seriously and facing right now.

• (0925)

[Translation]

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dion, you have seven minutes.

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Thank you, Mr. Miller. I want to commend you on your proficiency in French.

[English]

This is also to Mr. Lindsay and Mr. Hills. I have the same question for the three of you. Please be as specific as possible.

The question is: what would you like to read in the report of this committee about... Let's start first with the Olympics that are coming; we'll talk afterwards about after these Olympics. Is there something that at this point in the game we need to write in our report to help you, or is it too late anyway?

Mr. JD Miller: The cake is baked.

Mr. Steven Hills: I would agree with Mr. Miller: the cake is baked; this horse is on its way.

I believe, from the snow sport side—not just snowboarding—that we're as prepared as we possibly can be for the Sochi games.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: So that's done. We say “bravo” and “good luck”.

Mr. Steven Hills: There are a few additional small things, and I believe Own the Podium and Sport Canada have made some minor adjustments and agreed to those already, and some small additional funding pieces are in place. So, as far as the snow sports go, we're pretty much ready.

We are ready.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Lindsay.

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: I completely agree. We've had good preparation going in, but the planning to be able to get results at an Olympic games has to start twelve and eight years out.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: We'll talk about that just after this.

Mr. Miller, for Sochi, do you have any recommendations?

Mr. JD Miller: No. As I've said, the cake is baked and now it will play out on the hills.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you very much.

Now I have the same question, but after Sochi, because when you spoke with Mr. Dubé, I understand you had some concerns.

I would like you to formulate your answer in a way that it could be a recommendation in our report.

What would you like to read in this report about keeping the momentum going after Sochi?

Mr. Hills?

Mr. Steven Hills: Well, to keep the momentum going after Sochi, unfortunately it's the same old question. It's going to require more money.

As Mr. Miller said, the rest of the world is moving ahead. High performance is moving ahead, and that's increasingly expensive. Spending the same amount of money is effectively spending less in that competitive environment. Own the Podium has made some strides already to invest more in system development. Looking at an eight-year model of development rather than the four-year outlook, again, trying to win at the next games, as well as prepare for the following games, is a financial challenge. It is really all about money in order to continue to win at that momentum level.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Can you be more specific about where the money should go?

Mr. Steven Hills: The money should continue to be invested in high-performance preparation for the games, but further in the development of youth, and specifically—and I'll pick up on something Mr. Miller said and something I feel very passionately about—the provincial governments play an exceedingly large role in this. When athletes move from a large broad-based participation to a club level, the cost to the family for an athlete to compete at a club level with a qualified coach increases. Then when they move to a provincial team, the costs increase significantly, exponentially.

So the barrier for athletes to move through the system is at that provincial youth level. If there's any way to create, through the federal-provincial/territorial sport committee that exists, a matching bilateral program of funding at the provincial level to bring the provinces into the funding game, as British Columbia and Quebec have done and led the way in, that would have the most impact on the snow sports/winter side of things. It has to be at that provincial level.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Is there something we should do to help the provinces? If you take the B.C. and the Quebec model, what should the federal government do then?

Mr. Steven Hills: The federal government, in the cases of Quebec and B.C., I believe, has already come into a matching place through the OTP recommendations on some other projects. The Province of B.C. has stepped up with money to invest in high-performance sport at the level I just spoke of. The encouragement for this, the impetus, has been through some OTP carrots to a certain extent. B.C. stepped up, OTP matched it, and the programs came to life. Quebec has always been leading in the area of education with the *sport-études* program and that school-level, provincial-level athlete support, and investment. If that could occur in more provinces, that would significantly help our pool of talent.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Lindsay.

• (0930)

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: Yes, I would certainly second all that; I agree with all of that. I think that from the perspective of a sport that has less broad participation and needs to focus on participation a little bit more, doing things to support provincial initiatives for regionalized training centres could be a major factor. If we can get some sort of matching funding, it would help provinces keep athletes longer, keep them involved all the way through high school and potentially beyond high school. With some sort of proper connection to academics, I think that would be a major support for us.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Miller, the post-Sochi federal role...?

Mr. JD Miller: Well, I think the most constructive role that the federal government can play post-Sochi is to oblige all the parties to come to the table so as to determine what sports are important to Canadians, what should be the objectives of our country in the high-performance area, and how we measure success in these areas.

Clearly, my colleagues have mentioned concerns specific to their national sport organizations, but their concerns are applicable to most sport organizations, I would suggest to you. What are we going after? Why are we going after it? Does it strike to sustainability? What is it we wish to achieve?

We have sat for a long time in the afterglow of hosting the world at that magnificent event in Vancouver, and we've been complacent; and we now have the opportunity as we head into a period of challenge to sit down and look at where we want to go. This is fundamental. All stakeholders must move in common purpose. In order to do that, we have to know what the objectives are. It is central to using public and private moneys efficiently. It is central to people collaborating together; and clearly, that involves the provincial governments.

[Translation]

The Quebec government has always been a leader, so we don't have to ask Quebec to top up its contributions. Other provinces, however, have a long ways to go if we want to produce internationally ranking athletes in the next 15 years.

[English]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll now move to Mr. Boughen for seven minutes.

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

And let me add my voice of welcome to our panel this morning and thank you for sharing your expertise with us.

I think I'll look at questions for the panel, and any one of the three members may feel free to answer.

I heard Mr. Miller mention a decline in gold medals and I'm asking myself how we ascertain that. Have we got standard measurement—height, distance—that we put the athletes through and find that their times and distances do not match with current gold medallists? Or what procedures do we do in terms of forecasting how well we're going to do with this podium?

Mr. JD Miller: As you can imagine, there are a number of parties, both within Canadian sports system and in organizations across the world, that monitor performance. I refer to this as performance analytics. So based on the performances of Canadian athletes most recently at the 2013 world championships, on which I believe you were given a presentation by Mrs. Merklinger from Own the Podium, it's not difficult to project, whether within Canada or by people outside Canada, that there will be a significant drop in gold medal performance.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Well, what do we do to change it, now that we know it's hanging out there?

Mr. JD Miller: Well, again, going forward, we have to decide what our objectives are. Will the objectives of Canada be to produce gold medals, or will the objectives of Canada be to produce medals? I'm not opining on which is the appropriate objective. I can tell you without equivocation that the way you go about preparing for each is quite different, and how you would deploy money and expertise is quite different. This is why once and for all deciding what our objectives are is fundamental to moving forward and bringing all stakeholders together so that we can use our investments wisely and efficiently and have the best outcome.

• (0935)

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thank you.

Christopher, you mentioned that there's a chance that 30,000 people would be involved in biathlon at one stage or another of the sport. How do we attract 30,000 people to that sport in Canada?

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: Yes, as it says in the notes, we have stadiums of 30,000 people, and more out on course, in Europe.

One of the things I've always enjoyed about our sport is that it's got a fair amount of drama in it. It's not just watching someone ski off into the trees and then reappear after an hour. Every Olympics you get to see someone cry. It's quite exciting in a way, as long as it's not yours.

One of the initiatives we have always wished went further to support our sport is getting more access and more time for amateur sport on TV. I think this goes for all of our amateur sports. The more coverage we can get, the more private corporate sponsorship money will be available to us, and that can leverage the resources the government is putting in. Certainly, serving hot wine to the people in the stands doesn't hurt either.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Right.

Steven, I'm looking at what you said about the challenging environment and my thinking is, has the environment changed much from Canada to Russia or...?

Mr. Steven Hills: If you are speaking specifically about the Sochi landscape, Russia is a very interesting country. Although most of Russia or a good part of Russia that we see on TV—look at Moscow and St. Petersburg—is very European, Sochi-Adler and that area is not. It's a very long way to go. From my home in Squamish to Sochi, door to door, takes 30 hours, 22-plus hours in the air and a couple of planes. People and the service and the food is quite different. Our athletes are used to travelling around the world and competing everywhere. Sochi is going to be one of those very probably unique experiences for everyone.

I was there a month ago and it provides unique demands unlike any other place in the world, and the Canadian Olympic Committee and others will attest to that. As far as they're concerned, this will be the most complex mission the Canadian Olympic Committee has put together in terms of getting their stuff there, getting it organized, and working with the locals on the ground. The Russians are fiercely competitive. They're not always as helpful as they should be under the IOC rules, I can say that candidly. It's going to be a tough environment.

Mr. Ray Boughen: Thank you.

I'm wondering if each member of the panel might react to this question. How can we help JD get more private-sector involvement in fundraising for the Olympics? What are some thoughts you have on that, any and all?

Mr. Steven Hills: I think JD is doing a very good job as he spoke to the business approach. A key part of business is having a purpose and a network of supporters. As the success of B2ten expands, those people who are involved, I believe, will continue almost organically, internally to create and attract more support for the cause. As it proves successful, as the athletes and the programs...and support that B2ten provides is proven to be a necessary add-on, I think its success will beget more success.

Outside of that, the traditional sponsorship model is changing in Canada. The Canadian Olympic Committee has done a very good job of collectifying its brand and has drawn a lot of resources into that piece. And to be fair, it is at the expense of the smaller properties, products, brands, NSOs that are out there.

It's going to take some consolidation and some brand-building to attract more corporate support and/or the network of believers that JD has brought together, in my opinion.

Mr. Ray Boughen: What do you think? Do we have time?

Mr. Christopher Lindsay: The only thing I'd add to that is there may be an opportunity for looking specifically at matching up sport

brands. I mean, for us the reality is that Canada is not a huge market for consumption of biathlon, but Europe is. And if we have Canadian companies dealing exclusively with sales in Europe, Central Europe especially, I think we could be quite a help to them in increasing their exposure.

● (0940)

The Chair: Thank you.

We have five minutes left for this round.

Mr. Nantel.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I invite you all to wear your earpiece as all our team have many questions. They are going to be short ones.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Miller, I know you understand French well. I have just one question for you.

You often mention that Canadians will have to choose which sports they prefer. When you seek out private sponsorship, are there certain sports you have trouble selling and others that everyone wants to support? A brief answer would be appreciated. Thank you.

Mr. JD Miller: Is that for me or everyone?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: For you.

Mr. JD Miller: Hockey aside, some sports are more popular than others, but to be frank, I'm not all that involved in sponsorship. When we go looking for contributions from corporate Canada, the focus is more on matching a company with an athlete's personal story, their courage and perseverance.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Thank you.

[*English*]

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): I'll be very quick because Monsieur Lapointe has some questions.

My first one is in regard to snowboarding. Biathlon seems to be more male dominated. What provisions are there to encourage women in terms equal funding?

Second, I'm intrigued by this idea of the goal of encouraging physical literacy, and that question would be to Mr. Miller.

Could I have two quick answers to those?

Mr. Steven Hills: I can say very proudly regarding female participation in snowboarding that certainly as to the overall number of snowboarders as participants, it's pretty well split. Over 53% of our Sport Canada-carded athletes are female. More than half of our athletes receiving Sport Canada funding who are on our national team—pardon me, 45%. More than half of our national team are women.

Of our coaching staff, it's slightly less. Our coaching staff is 21% female, and increasing. Of the five medals in Sochi, three will likely be for women.

Mr. JD Miller: I'd like to address both in 30 seconds.

I don't view any issues with women. Women are roaring in Canada. They're winning the majority of medals at World Cups, world championships, and the Olympic Games. Men should be picking up their socks.

As to physical literacy, we view sport as a pyramid and we're talking today about the apex, the very top of the pyramid. One of the reasons why all of us are concerned is that sport participation rates are dropping dramatically in this country. Due to diabetes, obesity, screen times, and lack of physical education in schools, which is not an element under federal jurisdiction, we face a very skinny future a short 15 years down the road if we do not champion the cause of physical literacy through public-private partnerships.

We've gotten into it strictly out of necessity. It's so far away from being at the very top, but after Vancouver, it was clear to us that if someone doesn't try to activate corporate Canada in the area of physical literacy, we face a terrible human, financial, and social cost a generation down the road.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): My question is for Mr. Hills.

Mr. Henwood, of the Canadian Sport Institute, told the committee that what often happens when we become a leader in a particular sport, such as short track speed skating, is that other nations catch up pretty quickly.

Right now, we're a world leader in snowboarding. What can the federal government do to keep us at the top well into the future?

[English]

Mr. Steven Hills: Is your question specifically about who is on our heels in snowboarding?

Mr. François Lapointe: We were told by Mr. Henwood that very often we were the leaders in a sport like speed skating and that we're being caught up by other countries. Right now we're the world leader in your discipline. How can we make sure that we stay the world leader for Olympics to come?

Mr. Steven Hills: As I said in my earlier responses, we continue to invest in the high-performance group that is ready to go to Korea, but we must invest in the next generation, in the provincial level of athletes, and that's an eight-year project so that we can keep them involved in competitive snowboarding so that they can manage school. This is why the *sport-études* program in Quebec is so important. Programs like that elsewhere in the province are necessary. Our athletes in snowboarding at the top of the world are quite young.

They are able to find a way to compete, have fun, enjoy, and get their education at the same time so they don't have to make that choice and leave the sport prematurely because of those planning for after sport.

●(0945)

Mr. François Lapointe: And you have to make them interested in the sport very young.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

That's going to have to be the last word.

I'd like to thank our witnesses for your contributions.

We will suspend briefly to bring in our next round of witnesses.

Thank you very much.

●(0945)

_____ (Pause) _____

●(0950)

The Chair: We're going to call this meeting back to order.

We have our next round of witnesses, and we have, from Speed Skating Canada, Ian Moss, chief executive officer. From Skate Canada, we have Daniel Thompson, chief executive officer, and Elizabeth Manley-Theobald, who of course is an Olympic silver medallist. We appreciate your coming today.

By video conference—I think we're just having some minor technical difficulties today—we have Tim Farstad, executive director of the Canadian Luge Association.

What we're going to do is we're going to go ahead, and we'll start with Mr. Moss for eight minutes.

Mr. Ian Moss (Chief Executive Officer, Speed Skating Canada): Thank you very much. I will be brief, because I know we're all really here to talk to Elizabeth.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Ian Moss: First, let me thank the committee for this opportunity to provide you with an update on planning for the Olympic speed skating team program leading up to Sochi.

[Translation]

With less than 70 days remaining before the opening ceremonies, we are now in our selection and competition preparation phase for both our short track and long track teams.

[English]

We are confident that they will remain Canada's leading medal program for the winter Olympics and provide up to one third of the total medals for Canada as we continue to push toward our collective goal of contending for top position in total medals won in Sochi.

I'd like to provide you first with a snapshot of our team's current preparation, and then speak further to the strong support provided by the Government of Canada for both our high-performance and development programming.

[*Translation*]

As an organization, we are very proud of the fact that we count all territories and provinces amongst our membership and that our national teams draw athletes from all segments of society and regions of the country.

[*English*]

First, our short-track team are well into their preparation plans for Sochi. We were the first team nominated to the Olympic committee and approved. That was back in August. They have now completed their World Cup qualifying process for Sochi, as I'm sure you followed in the news. We're actually just waiting for the final announcements from our international federation, but we're almost 100% certain now that we have qualified a full team for the Sochi games, which is of course what our goal was. That means we'll have three athletes competing in each distance and in the team pursuit.

The long-track team process is a bit...slow is the wrong word, but they're just in the midst of their World Cup qualifying at the moment. We hosted, as Canada, the first World Cup event of the year, the largest one in many years, on the fastest ice in the world, which is at the Calgary Olympic Oval, of course a fabulous legacy from the 1988 Olympics. In December, we will be selecting the team and will move forward with the Olympic committee on the announcements and so on for that. Again, our goal is to qualify a full team on the long-track side based on our country quota.

Many of you know the success that speed skating has enjoyed at the Olympic Games over the years. Of course it's much due to the strength of our clubs and provincial/territorial programs as feeders to the national program. But we've also been able to build a strong high-performance infrastructure at both our national training centres, at Maurice Richard Arena for the short-track program in Montreal, and at the Calgary Olympic Oval for long-track.

Our coaches and sport-science support teams are world class. Research into leading-edge technology in our sport maintains our competitive edge. Our commitment to the long-term athlete development model ensures that we are identifying and retaining athletes in our system for future national teams. We're very appreciative of the support that we get from Sport Canada through the Government of Canada, and of course Own the Podium, and we do have some considerable support from our corporate sponsors. So that goes towards our strength in the high-performance program and our continued development on the domestic side.

We are equally proud of our collective efforts in the area of domestic programming, providing engagement opportunities for all Canadians regardless of social and economic status. With 14,000 members, 140 clubs across all territories and provinces, we offer a natural opportunity for all Canadians to become engaged and to embrace our winter climate. Much of our activity remains outdoors, so on natural ice.

● (0955)

[*Translation*]

We have a very strong presence in the province of Quebec—which is home to almost half our membership—and so we remain vigilant in our presentation of the sport in both official languages.

[*English*]

We're proud of the growth of the sport in all parts of the country, and extremely proud of the fact that we have a short-track team member, an Olympic team member, from the Northwest Territories and a leading long-track member from northern B.C., clearly showing there aren't any real geographic boundaries to opportunities in speed skating.

Turning back to Sochi and Russia, there have been comments previously, but we're very confident of the preparations done by the Olympic Committee in conjunction with the various sports. I think you're pretty familiar with the nominating process that sports go through. We're in the process of doing that now with the Olympic Committee. When athletes become members of the Olympic team, they adhere to the policies and protocol as outlined by the Olympic Committee relationship.

Speed Skating Canada will have board and senior staff representation on site in Sochi. We feel very confident that our relationship with the Olympic Committee staff is strong, and we're ready for any eventuality.

[*Translation*]

In closing, I would like to reiterate to this committee the importance of continued support for sport infrastructure development in Canada, and for the international competition hosting grant program.

[*English*]

Speed Skating Canada has a strong reputation with our international federation for hosting international competitions, and that's both World Cups and world championships. Hosting provides us with a competitive edge for our athletes, a public profile for the sport both locally and nationally, and a platform to recognize the support of government and our corporate partners in the promotion of a healthy and competitive nation.

We're also well aware that our two main hosting and national training facilities, the Calgary oval and the Maurice Richard Arena are aging and have a relatively short operating lifespan ahead of them. We must plan with our government and municipal partners now for options a decade or more away with respect to the replacement of these facilities for Canadian sport to remain competitive and relevant in the international sport community.

I thank you for providing me with this opportunity to share my thoughts and our plans with respect to Sochi's success, and as importantly, for me to commend the Government of Canada for its continued commitment to amateur sport. I hope that we, as Speed Skating Canada, embody the principles of engagement, pluralism, and performance that are seen as reflective of our ideals, not only for Canadians but also as Canadians on a world stage.

Merci.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Moss.

I'd first like to welcome to the meeting Mr. Farstad, from Calgary. We'll come back to you in a few moments.

Now we're going to move to Mr. Thompson and Ms. Manley-Theobald from Skate Canada, for eight minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Daniel Thompson (Chief Executive Officer, Skate Canada): Good morning, Mr. Chair.

My name is Daniel Thompson, and I am proud to be here today as the CEO of Skate Canada.

[*English*]

I'd like to thank the committee members for their interest in hearing more about the preparation of our athletes for the upcoming 2014 winter Olympic Games in Sochi, Russia. I am privileged to be joined this morning by someone who inspired a nation 25 years ago when she won the silver medal in ladies' figure skating at the 1988 Olympic winter Games in Calgary.

Just before Liz Manley shares her passion for our sport with you, I wanted to help you understand more about skating in Canada and our preparations for these games. Skating is integral to our nation's culture and sporting history. Skate Canada is the organization that teaches Canadians to skate, from Vancouver Island to St. John's, Newfoundland, and north to Iqaluit. Every athlete who will compete in Sochi started out in CanSkate, the pre-eminent learn-to-skate program developed and offered by Skate Canada for over 25 years. Now with over 183,000 registered members in more than 1,200 clubs, and 5,200 professional coaches, Skate Canada provides everyone, from toddler to senior, the opportunity to learn to skate. While some will go on to play hockey and ringette or join my colleague Ian Moss' group at Speed Skating Canada, many others will learn to skate for fun and to know the joy of skating.

Others pursue their dreams in competitive skating to the highest level. Our 2014 figure skating team members each began at a community rink, driven there by a dedicated parent, greeted by amazing volunteers who run the clubs, and taught by a caring, professional coach.

Because our athletes had outstanding results at the world championships in London last March, with seven placements in the top 10, we have qualified the largest figure skating team of any country for the Sochi games, with 17 athletes, the same number that Canada sent to Calgary in 1988.

Leading the team are the reigning Olympic champions Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir, from the Ilderton Skating Club; our three-time world champion Patrick Chan, from Toronto; the current bronze medallists in pairs, Meagan Duhamel from Lively, Ontario, and Eric Radford from Balmertown, Ontario; and Kaetlyn Osmond, who began skating in Newfoundland and now trains in Alberta.

These athletes and the 11 others who will join them will head to the Sochi games with world-class preparation and a superb support team. The financial contribution of the federal government's funding program—in particular, the Own the Podium program—has been

vital to these athletes. They are able to train full time and to have access to all the best facilities, coaching, and integrated sports services, which will help them compete to the highest level.

Canadian figure skaters have won 22 Olympic medals, more than any other winter sport except for speed skating and short track. We have no doubt that this total will be increased this year, especially with the new team event added to figure skating. Canada's depth across all four disciplines makes us a contender in this new competition.

As well, 2014 is a special year for Skate Canada as we celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Canadian figure skating championships here in Ottawa from January 9 to 14. In celebration of this centennial, several of our 2014 Olympic figure skaters will join us next fall for a special tour that will visit towns, cities, and clubs across Canada. Their success stories will especially encourage new Canadians to learn the joys of skating and to understand why skating is truly Canadian.

I was fortunate to be in the Calgary Saddledome on the night that Liz Manley electrified the crowd with her free skate and won the silver medal. It was one of those heart-stopping, goosebump moments that we all remember. Her inspiring performance captured a nation. I'd like you to hear more about our sport from Liz.

Thanks, Liz.

• (1000)

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald (Olympic Silver Medalist, Skate Canada): Thank you, Dan.

Thank you, everyone, for having me here today.

As an Olympic year approaches, I find myself looking back at my life and my journey to the Olympics. If you can believe it, it all started when I was three years old, by borrowing a pair of my brother's hockey skates. It wasn't long before my parents realized that I absolutely loved to skate and they enrolled me in what we call CanSkate lessons. As my love for skating grew quickly, my parents sacrificed their time and their financial resources to help me realize my dream.

My heroes were the women in the sport, especially the ones from right here in Ottawa, Barbara Ann Scott and Lynn Nightingale. So many aspects of my skating life have come full circle for me. I started skating right here in Nepean, Ontario, and then moved to Trenton, Ontario. Now I have the privilege of coaching young future skaters nationwide. In 1978—yes, I'm telling my age—I was a flower retriever at the World Figure Skating Championships here in Ottawa, and I was out there picking up the flowers thrown on the ice after the skaters' performances, and skated madly back to hand them to my idols. One of them included Scott Hamilton, who then went on to become the 1984 Olympic champion.

Recently, a couple of weeks ago, I selected some of the flower retrievers who will start their dreams by doing the same role at the 100th anniversary of the Canadian Figure Skating Championships coming up in January. I am so thrilled when people come up to me and tell me they were so inspired by my skate in Calgary at the 1988 winter games. I still vividly remember every moment of those two weeks and being part of the team that included the great Brian Orser and the incomparable Tracy Wilson and Rob McCall. Our preparation for those games was extremely different from what this year's teams are going through. We often trained in isolation and rarely saw our fellow skaters, and we didn't have much attention from media in those days.

Today's athletes have more competitions, more expectations, and also an incredible team working with them. I've seen in the past few years how Skate Canada, with its high-performance camp at the start of each season, helps our athletes be fully prepared for their international assignments. It also builds a great team spirit. As well, the skaters have access to tremendous wealth and knowledge in the sports science field, nutrition, and sport-specific training, which was really lacking in my day. They are the best prepared team we've ever had.

Twenty-five years ago—once again I'm telling you my age—I was intimidated by the senior people at Skate Canada, while these skaters have come to know them and embrace them as the strong support team that they are. And it's not just strong support from Skate Canada, but from the COC, the federal government, and the corporate community. And most of all, they are a part of a warm, welcoming sport family. We didn't have the strong spirit that I see in today's sport world in Canada. Both the figure skating team and the wider Canadian Olympic team have had more opportunities to be together and to be prepared. When they arrive in Sochi, they will already feel as much a part of the Canadian team, ready to compete in their own event, and most of all, to cheer on their teammates in other sports. I wish them very much success.

Thank you

• (1005)

The Chair: Thank you very much, and I think that you wanted to show off your medal.

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: Yes. I don't normally bring this, but I figured you might all want to see it, and I think you're all old enough to remember.

[*Applause*]

I always do that. It's the first thing I check out, the ages in the room.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We're now going to go to Calgary, Alberta, and hear from Tim Farstad, who is the executive director of the Canadian Luge Association. You have the floor for eight minutes.

Mr. Tim Farstad (Executive Director, Canadian Luge Association): Good morning, and thank you for the invitation to speak to you today.

With Sochi Olympic preparation, our goal in CLA is to create an environment that allows the athletes to be completely confident that everything is in place so they can perform at their best.

I'll go through team selection, Olympic staffing, preparation and familiarization, our 2013-14 season, team leader meetings, pre-Olympic staging, potential issues, and athlete keys and expectations.

To start off, our team selection will be completed December 15. Our expectations for our team numbers for three-men would be: Sam Edney, Mitch Malyk, and John Fennell. On the women's side we have four qualifying for three spots: Alex Gough, Kim McRae, Arianne Jones, and Jordan Smith. We'll have one doubles team with Tristan Walker and Justin Snith, and the new team relay where we'll be very competitive is with Sam Edney, Alex Gough, Tristan Walker, and Justin Snith.

Important to our team's performance at the games, obviously, is staffing and they'll be led by our team leader, Walter Corey, who is our high-performance director. We've hired some of the best coaches in the world to ensure our team has everything in place. Our head coach is Wolfgang Staudinger, and assistant coach and technician is Bernie Glass. We were able to get a Russian assistant coach added to our team, Mikael Zavialov, because we felt it was very important to have a connection to the Russian environment.

We have one of the top strength and conditioning coaches in Jeremiah Barnert.

Public relations, which is very important at the games, will be taken care of by Chris Doran. As well, I will be there to coordinate with friends and family and sponsorship relations. It is very important that we keep the friends and families coordinated and away from our athletes, so they don't go to our athletes and expect their assistance while the athletes are in their Olympic bubble.

Our coaching plan is pretty simple. They are very long days and we want to ensure they are focused on high-priority tasks so they can maximize their coaching technical skills and minimize burnout.

It was very important for us to get a Russian connection, so we put a Russian coach on our team. He's been around since 2011.

We're going to focus on start-ramp coaching and on track in the key areas that are important for this track.

In order to compete properly at the games, we felt it was very important to familiarize ourselves with Sochi, so we've been there since 2009 in FIL Congress. In 2011, we attended a familiarization Canadian Olympic Committee tour. Our athletes have been on the track since March 2012, and we were able to get more of our people there than any other country, to explore the track itself.

We've attended two international training weeks in 2012 and 2013. We were able to do a sliding agreement with the Russian Federation where we were able to get 45% more run volume on the track than other teams. That was very important to us also.

In the season going forward, we were able to take our athletes to Germany in the summer to compete against the top athletes in the world at the start camp. That was perfect for our athletes to know where they were and develop what they needed to do this summer.

Our schedule is pretty simple. This fall we're in Norway, then to Austria, Germany, and then back to Canada and the U.S. for the final two World Cups before our qualification period has ended. We're doing our final preparations with our team leader, Walter Corey, who will be attending a team leader meeting on December 12 with the Canadian Olympic Committee to finalize the rooming lists, sled storage, and sled transportation in the village, and all the rest of the Olympic winter Games logistics.

Our pre-staging camp is going to be in Königssee, Germany, and obviously closer to the venue than Canada. We'll have the ability to access gyms, hockey rinks, start ramps, and be able to slide on a similar track to Sochi, so it will help prepare our athletes. There will only be a three-hour time change to Sochi. so we felt that was a perfect and comfortable place for our athletes to stage just prior to the games.

•(1010)

Our plan is to travel to the games on January 31 and avoid Moscow, which is what our team always needed to do—avoid Moscow because of the logistics issues up there. We'll be going Munich to Frankfurt and straight to Sochi. That's a nice win for our team.

We're arriving on February 1 and travelling straight to the main Olympic village, so our athletes can get acclimatized and take care of their outfitting in the main village. Then on February 2 we'll be heading straight up to the mountain villages, which is where our team will live and compete from.

Our basic schedule is that on February 3 we'll be right on the track inspecting it, on February 4 we'll be starting training, and we'll get into official training on February 5. Our events are February 8 and 9 for the men's race, February 10 and 11 for the women's race, February 12 for the doubles competition, and the team relay is on February 13.

We have identified some potential issues, for example, we have no night training, but all the races are in the evening, which is difficult for our athletes to get used to, the different light. We were able to do some race simulation in the evenings during the international training week to combat this potential issue. One of the other issues concerned a place to tune our equipment. We've worked with the Canadian Olympic Committee, which has been very helpful in securing space at the Olympic village and at the track, should we need to do some sled preparation at the track.

The Russian home-track advantage is one of our big issues, which is the reason we ensured we did a track exchange with the Russians to get as much extra training as we could on the competition track.

One of the other issues we were dealing with is an equipment change or a rule change this spring. We were able to purchase the equipment needed to test our sleds this summer to ensure we came into the season with equipment that was up to snuff and would be legal for racing at the Olympic Games.

One of the big changes for us is the team relay. An issue we're dealing with is that usually when our athletes complete their event they're finished, but now they're going to have a couple more days and then race again in the team relay. So we have plans in place to ensure that our men's athlete will continue to train once he's finished

his singles event. When it comes to Alice Goff, we're hopeful that she'll be in the medals for a women's race, so we have a victory plan in place so she can celebrate her win and then get right back and focused for the team relay two days later.

The Chair: Thank you very much, Mr. Farstad.

Mr. Farstad, we're going to move to the questioning, and you will have an opportunity to expand a little bit on your presentation.

Mr. Young, for seven minutes.

•(1015)

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Moss, I have notes in front of me that say that speed skating in Canada has consistently been Canada's highest medal-winning sport in the Winter Olympics.

Could you please tell us briefly the elements of success? How did you do that?

Mr. Ian Moss: Well, briefly is a challenge. Clearly, we pride ourselves on having a world-class program in terms of our coaching support and our infrastructure. That's the first thing. We've made a huge commitment to that over many years, which, quite frankly, a lot of sports do. Through the help of Own the Podium in particular, that's really been identified as a step forward for Canadian sport.

There is a long history. Short-track speed skating and long-track speed skating are quite unique, really, in terms of the type of athlete they attract and so on. Long-track has a strong tradition in Europe, of course, and has passed over to us. Short-track has a very strong tradition, particularly in Quebec. I would say the strength of that tradition in Quebec has certainly driven our success in the international realm.

So it is a combination of many things. We're proud that the majority of our coaches are Canadian and the majority of our support team are Canadian, so we have a lot of internal expertise.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you.

Mr. Thompson, I heard something before from a previous witness that concerned me a great deal: that sport participation in Canada is dropping dramatically. You used the term "physical literacy", which kind of sounds to me that you're reading about sport. I guess it means phys. ed. and participation in phys. ed. How can we get more of our young people off the couch and onto the ice?

Mr. Daniel Thompson: Well, as you know, we pride ourselves at Skate Canada in having a program called CanSkate. It teaches 125,000 kids who are 5 to 15 years old how to skate. But there are 5.5 million kids in that age group. So there are lots more kids out there who can learn the joy of skating. We really believe that skating is an integral part of being Canadian. It's part of our DNA as Canadians.

We're just redoing our strategic plan, and one of the things we're talking about is this balance between skating to win and skating for life. We're very much committed to ensuring that we grow our learn-to programs and that we create school programs and programs in partnership with municipalities and other third parties. So this is going to be a real focus for us.

But it's about creating opportunities at the local level. It's really about teaching how to skate and then creating the pathway so the children can decide what they want to do with skating. Do they just want to enjoy skating and skate on the canal, or do they want to take up speed skating, hockey, or ringette? That's our challenge as Canadians in this Canadian sport. It's really evolving from being about figure skating to being about skating and to getting Canadians to experience the joy of skating.

Mr. Terence Young: Thank you.

Elizabeth Manley-Theobald, thank you for being here today. By the way, thank you to everyone for coming here today.

I wanted to ask your perspective. At Skate Canada you teach young people to compete and to win. I'm wondering if you can share your experience. When we teach young people to compete and win, whether they win gold or silver or bronze or they just achieve personal best, how does that reflect in the rest of their lives? What benefits does that give them in every other area of endeavour?

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: It benefits tremendously in all areas. It's not just so much with figure skating but all sport. I feel, as an athlete, what sport brought to me is the understanding of reaching for goals and not giving up on things so quickly, and the journey to achievement and success. I think that's imbedded at a very young age. When you get involved in a sport, you become involved in a team spirit situation. So, you get the social part of it and you get the "off the couch" factor, so-called, but you also can bring that through as an adult.

As I look at my life since being a skater, I may not have the master's degree from university, but what the sport has taught me about life and what it has given me to have a successful lifestyle as an adult has been amazing. It's given me confidence. It's given me a heck of a lot of ups and downs and how to deal with that. That's really important in our youth today, to be able to enforce that there are going to be a lot of ups and downs, even as you get older. If you can learn from the bumps and bruises as a youngster and realize "just get back up and it's going to be okay", you can bring that into your adult life, into the business world, into whatever you may achieve.

I have a tendency to work more with the grassroots in our sport. I am one of those Olympians who loves the little ones, the little ones running around in the hockey helmets and the snow suits, because they're so impressionable at that age and I want them to understand that, as Dan was saying, sport can be for life and it can be a passion. Skating can be a passion and there's so much more to it. I want them to smile and remember me as that first teacher. That's the passion I try to bring into the sport. I think a lot of our professional coaches, with this new strategic planning that we're doing in our sport, are trying to gain that passion out of the kids, so they will stay in sport and there will be a healthier future for our government.

• (1020)

Mr. Terence Young: That is a fantastic answer. Thank you.

Elizabeth, could you please explain? This is the first time I've heard of this team sport. I'm really glad to hear of it, because watching figure skating is so stressful. They've trained years, and to make one little mistake might make them lose. But this team thing is not like that, I assume.

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: What's so great about it is that it's the first time it's coming into the Olympic Games, and we have the strongest team ever going into the Olympic Games. So, we're really on a great road to winning this event. What it's going to be is that the top 10 countries—in the point system over the Grand Prix series and the international events this year—will get to compete in what's called the team event. The best woman, best man, best dance team, and best pair team from each country will compete. But the advantage of this is that you're allowed to have two substitutes in any event. So we may have our previous Olympic champions, Tessa and Scott, skating in the free program of the dance, but we might put in our second-ranked team, which is ranking very high at the international level in the short portion of the competition. Then overall it's combined at the end for the winning country. But if we have two different men competing in it, let's say one doing the short and one doing the free, both those skaters will get a medal. So, there will be more medals to our Canadians. It's a great advantage, because we probably will take advantage of those two substitutes; we are so strong in all the aspects right now, going into Sochi.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll move to

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dubé, you have seven minutes.

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

I didn't witness those Olympics. I was in my mother's stomach at that time. Well, not stomach; it's a bad translation.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Matthew Dubé: She was very pregnant with me. There you go. But I guess somewhere a positive vibe came from that.

In all seriousness, first I want to say to you folks with Skate Canada that Ms. Mathyssen and I got to visit you in London last spring and that was just phenomenal. I think you have a great group of people and I think it's worth saying on the record. And while I'm getting things on the record,

[*Translation*]

including for Mr. Moss, I want to point out how pleased we were with the positive outcome in the Mathieu Giroux case, which you dealt with last year. We believe in the importance of respecting the country's diversity. A Quebecker was in a tough situation. We commend the effort and hope it's a good sign of things to come.

My questions are mainly for Mr. Thompson, of Skate Canada.

As you mentioned earlier, next year will mark your 100th anniversary. Do you plan to celebrate the achievements of your athletes at the Sochi games? Your athletes are truly wonderful individuals.

[English]

Mr. Daniel Thompson: That's great. Thank you.

We're very excited about the upcoming 100th. I don't know if the committee is aware but the Governor General of Canada has a long history with Canadian figure skating and the Canadian championships. The first Canadian championships were created by Governor General Minto, so the Governor General has agreed to be the patron of our 100th anniversary and we will have an event at Rideau Hall on January 8 and we're very excited about that.

We're also taking this time to invite all the Canadian champions who've ever been a Canadian champion to Ottawa for the championships. We hope we're going to have up to 150 alumni at the event. We're going to have an alumni gala on the last night, and it will coincide with the Olympic team being named. It's going to be a very special moment.

We're going to have a skating program at City Hall's Rink of Dreams. We're having the Nepean Skating Club and others and Liz help teach people in attendance to skate, and we're also going to be working with some charity groups, so we're very excited about that.

We're going to have a special celebration after the games. We're looking to do a 30-city tour across Canada, going to small and medium-sized towns, and even where they don't have a club. In the far north, we're going to do clinics, and we're going to bring members of the national team with us, so it's going to be an exciting time. We're looking forward to it. And this is all part of our mission, our strategy to bring skating to Canadians. We're going to call this Canada Skates and we're going to finish it off with the celebration at the 101st Canadian championships.

We're also looking to bring our archives and our national museum on the road in a big tractor-trailer so Canadians can share in the heritage of Canadian skating.

• (1025)

Mr. Matthew Dubé: That's great.

One of the things you folks have talked about in this project is getting local clubs more involved in the celebration. And in that spirit, from what I've noticed as an outside observer, it often seems that former champions and medallists stay on and mentor sometimes indirectly and sometimes directly. You're better placed to answer that. We know a lot of volunteer work goes into this and the impression I'm getting is that you folks want to celebrate that with a bit of indulgence because it might get off Sochi a bit, but I think you folks are doing a great thing. Maybe you want to elaborate a bit on celebrating that aspect of things, the local level, which I guess creates the future stars at the end of the day, right?

Mr. Daniel Thompson: I'll start, but Liz, jump in.

We have 1,200 clubs across Canada and we have a skating club in every community across Canada. They're driven by volunteers, and we want to celebrate that. So when we visit across Canada for the 100th, we're going to create skating shows and there's going to be a local component where the local club will participate and they'll be able to have a performer in the program, and they'll also be able to promote the CanSkate program.

One of the things we think is very important is that the face of Canada is changing dramatically. We've got a lot of newcomers, and we as a club system need to embrace those new Canadians, so we want to create programs specifically for newcomers. Frankly, whatever discipline of skating they go into doesn't matter. We want to get them on the ice and we want them to enjoy skating, and our volunteers will be great leaders to help grow skating as a national passion.

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: I can't speak on behalf of the other sports, but figure skating is one of the greatest sports for volunteerism. We have a tremendous number. You can go to any event, like the World Figure Skating Championships in London, and we have hundreds of volunteers. I think that just goes to show the strength of what figure skating is. We want people to want to be involved. Just for the so-called picking—the tryouts of flower retrievers and ice patchers and everything for the 100th anniversary—we had over 100 kids show up for about 30 places. That just goes to show that the kids want to be involved, and the parents do too. I'm proud to say that when I went to a competition when I was competing, I could always rely on a great volunteer. Skate Canada has been very strong for that—it's been great.

[Translation]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Thank you.

Mr. Moss, you brought up the challenges that lie ahead when it comes to keeping facilities up to date. Speed skating is often said to be one of the sports where our competition sometimes catches up to us and where efforts are needed to stay at the forefront.

Would you tell us what could be done to give our athletes, at every performance level, the facilities they need?

Mr. Ian Moss: Thank you for the question, Mr. Dubé.

[English]

We're in a good place right now relative to the current national training centres. We have a fairly good club system that provides a feeder process. Going forward, we have a concern about the longevity of our training facilities, particularly the Olympic Oval in Calgary. There's probably a 15-year lifespan on it, so we have to now start looking at what the next step is, how we can make it viable. It will require a financial partnership to either replace it or maintain it at a higher level.

• (1030)

The Chair: Thank you very much. We're going to have to move on to

[Translation]

Mr. Dion, you have seven minutes.

[English]

As well, I'll just remind witnesses that Mr. Farstad is also part of the panel and he might like to take a question or two.

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

[English]

Madam Manley, first, thank you very much for bringing in this medal. I think, if I'm not wrong, it's the first time I've had a medal in my hands, and for a nanosecond I imagined it was me who won it.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Hon. Stéphane Dion: It's quite moving, and thank you very much for the inspiration, for the dream, the love of sport, and the pride you give to all Canadians, and to the world, and to the sport that you are so excellent at.

Mr. Thompson, Mr. Moss, Mr. Farstad, even though you did not bring any medals with you, welcome.

I will ask the same questions that I asked the previous witnesses. First, is there something this committee can recommend to the government for Sochi in your sport, or would you say everything is ready and there is nothing further we can do?

Mr. Ian Moss: Why don't we let Tim go first.

Mr. Tim Farstad: Just so I understand, you're asking if there's something we can do at this point to help preparations for Sochi?

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Yes.

Mr. Tim Farstad: I would say that at this point everything is in place. I think it's a little late, at least for any needs for our sport. We've been supported very well through the Sport Canada Own the Podium program. We pretty well ask for all our high-performance needs as we go into the events. Everything's in place for us for this Olympics, and we're very excited and ready to perform for Canada.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Thank you very much.

Mr. Ian Moss: It's the same in speed skating. We're good to go.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Okay.

[Translation]

Mr. Thompson or Ms. Manley-Theobald, would you care to comment?

[English]

Mr. Daniel Thompson: There's one thing you could help us with. We have the strongest team ever going—close to the Calgary team. I shouldn't say “ever”.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Mr. Daniel Thompson: The Calgary team was awesome, but we have one citizenship issue. We have a woman by the name of Piper Gilles, and she's been waiting for her citizenship for a year and a half. Everyone says it's on its way, but you could help us with that. That's one. She has a chance to make the team in dance. We have three dance teams going. We have two very strong teams, and there's a bunch of teams fighting it out for third place, so if you could help us out there, that would be great.

We're very proud of our preparations for Sochi. Mike Slipchuk has been there probably five times, so we're ready. We're actually going to have a staging camp in Boden, Germany for our women speed skaters, so they can fly in and out. So we're set, ready to go. Next, I'll be looking at identifying those athletes in the pipeline that we can move from our junior Grand Prix to the Grand Prix series. We need

more kids in the funnel, so our next challenge is how we identify that pathway, how we strengthen—

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That's after Sochi, though.

Mr. Daniel Thompson: That's after Sochi, right.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Okay. On the immigration problem you just mentioned, I guess you don't want to comment on it because it's a personal case.

Is it a problem that has been made public?

Mr. Daniel Thompson: I don't think it's a problem. We're expecting that she will get citizenship any day now.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Okay, maybe Mr. Dykstra will speak to the minister—

Mr. Daniel Thompson: It would be nice.

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Yes, we're working on it.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: That's good.

My next question is the one you started to speak about, Mr. Thompson—keeping the momentum after Sochi. Is there something you would like us to recommend in our report?

Maybe Mr. Farstad can start because he's so patient with us.

Mr. Tim Farstad: Yes, that's where we could use some assistance.

As I said, we're very set for our Sochi plan and financed that way. It's the next level where we need help; the sustainability of our program. All the programs in place right now support us at the very top level, but it's the next level we need help with, so we can continue to sustain and bring forward those athletes who are at the level they need to be to compete for medals.

It's a funding issue, to be honest. It's that next level of support we need, to continue to be at the elite level we're trying to be at.

● (1035)

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Is it a matter of the amount or is it also the way the money is distributed?

Mr. Tim Farstad: It's the amount, but also we have to be able to use it for our development athletes. Most of the funding we receive is restricted to our national team, for our national coaches and that very top-level athlete.

We need funds for the next level—for our junior, national, and development levels—so that they can have the coaches, training, and equipment they need to develop that level of skill.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: The base of the pyramid is too narrow, is that what you are saying?

Is that your view, Mr. Moss?

Mr. Ian Moss: That's correct.

It's really a funding alignment issue: the regular ice-time cost now for a club is about \$200 an hour. Things are getting very expensive for people to get into sport.

Getting some stronger alignment, whether it's federal-provincial and then provincial-municipal, would be an obvious benefit to all of us, would be a plus. Certainly for us, and I know it's not only us, the whole infrastructure issue of facilities is catching up quickly, and it will affect us at all levels.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Thompson, go ahead.

Mr. Daniel Thompson: Yes, I'll add to that.

The top of the funnel is not bad; it's the bottom and the middle of the funnel. It's getting more coaches who are highly skilled to get those kids up to the next level so we can win those medals. I think that's a huge piece.

I do like the comment about federal and provincial collaboration in terms of the athlete pathway and ensuring that we can maximize every dollar spent in the system, right from the municipality to the provincial level to the federal level. I know this work is ongoing, but it is very important.

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: The biggest complaints I'm hearing as a professional coach at the grassroots level are what was just stated—ice costs. Go to different areas and ice costs can jump anywhere from \$100 an hour to almost \$285 an hour. Young families with three or four children get involved in skating or CanSkate programs. They're very excited, they want to move on, but then they start seeing the cost of these sports, and with four children sitting at home, it becomes an expensive decision on the family's part.

I know the problem that exists in my particular area is huge ice costs. We can't have the amount of ice we would like; therefore, we've got an overload on the ice, where kids aren't getting the attention and the quality that they could be getting, and it's all cost efficient. That's, once again, where provincial and funding and everything comes in, where it can help offset some of the costs on these clubs and programs.

The Chair: Thank you.

We're going to move to Mr. Richards and Mr. Leung, who are going to split about six-plus minutes.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Thanks, Mr. Chair.

I want to try to save a little time for Mr. Leung, so I'll try to be as quick as I can.

I've got two questions, one specifically for you, Ms. Manley-Theobald, and the other one is for each of the organizations, whoever would like to answer.

I'll start with you, Ms. Manley. As someone who comes from the Calgary area, I certainly recall very well, with very fond memories, the Olympics in 1988 that we had in Calgary, of course, and in Canmore, which is in my riding. You did really inspire a nation, and I want to make sure you hear that. I'm sure you hear it often, but you really did, and I appreciate your being here today.

Since your time as a competitive skater, you've stayed involved in the sport as a coach and otherwise, so you would be very uniquely positioned to answer the question I'd like to ask. From the time that

you were competing as an athlete to now, what kind of changes have you seen in terms of support from the Government of Canada, whether it be financial or otherwise, in our support for sport?

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: I believe it has not only been a huge financial difference. You know, there was only so much funding that was allowed back 25 years ago in the 1980s, and sport wasn't as big as it is in Canada today. So yes, that is a huge part, but I think more it's the embracing of sport in government, the understanding of what sport is really about and what it can do. It filters into all different areas, into health care and into all these other aspects of government. I think it has now been an eye-opener, and we can produce some great champions. But there is a huge difference, I'd say, in 25 years, just in the attention and the embracing of the athlete.

You know, I think in the 1980s sometimes we were just somebody trying to go for a medal, and now it's so much more. There's more at stake. There's a career for the athlete.

I really believe that we are producing heroes, mentors, and idols, and this is what our younger generation needs to see. We need to see them get off the couch away from the computer, the Game Boys, and all the little things that don't get them moving. We need to create these heroes for them, these people who inspire them to get out there and do something: the Sidney Crosbys, maybe the Elizabeth Manleys still. That's what is so important, and that's the great change that I'm seeing. We're able to sit in front of a committee like this and tell you what we're about and you guys are here to help us. That's so important. Twenty-five years ago, that wasn't there.

● (1040)

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you, and I think that is something that we do see. I think that's why as a government we have tried to make sure that we're supporting our sports and our athletes. You are right; we're creating heroes and encouraging young children to get more involved in sport, which obviously has great benefits, so I appreciate your response there.

When we talked about support for sport in the previous panel, Mr. Miller from B2ten talked about the model of corporate sponsorship for sport. I don't know that I heard that from any of the rest of you.

Mr. Farstad, I did certainly hear you mention in your opening remarks about a corporate sponsorship that your organization had. I'm sure you all do have some, and I wondered if you could all tell us a little bit about that and what we could do as a government to further encourage that corporate involvement, particularly in the beginning part of the Olympic cycle.

I'll start with you, Mr. Farstad, and if you can all be very quick, I can leave a little time for Mr. Leung.

Mr. Tim Farstad: When it comes to corporate sponsorship, it's difficult out there, as we all know. We've tried to put a for sale sign on our helmets to try to find corporate sponsors. I think what you can do to help us would be anything the government could do to make it more interesting for a corporation to be involved in sports, things like tax benefits and anything that could be gained, even more than just being a partner with us, would be one way that might make it successful for our sports.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you. To the other two, could you be quick as well?

Mr. Ian Moss: Yes, I certainly agree. Sometimes it's not a direct connection with government, it's more inspiring and creating the environment for corporate Canada to jump on board. To Elizabeth's point, times have changed, and our amateur athletes are seen as icons and figureheads. We are getting some traction that way, and however we can continue that will be helpful.

Mr. Daniel Thompson: I think from a sponsor point of view that corporations today are looking for relationships that they can extend in community. In the 1980s and 1990s, it was all about events, but now corporations want to be able to talk to their 500 Canadian Tire stores. We in sport need to be better, and government needs to help encourage our sports to create programs that can live in every community where we have clubs, and against the learn-to space versus the elite space. If you construct it right, corporations are looking to support this.

Mr. Blake Richards: Thank you.

I hope I've left some time for Mr. Leung.

The Chair: There's a bit over a minute left.

Mr. Chungsen Leung (Willowdale, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Richards, for sharing your time.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the panel.

My question is quite short. It's from the standpoint of international competition, especially from emerging economies like South Korea and China. They are rapidly catching up. Over the past few Olympics they have achieved podium status.

Specifically to Speed Skating Canada and Skate Canada, if we look at how they achieved that position, they didn't necessarily have all government funding, and as a matter of fact, a lot of them have come over to Canada to train, or gone to Europe to train.

Perhaps you could share with us how they have done this. How have they done it differently? Is there anything we can learn from their method to achieve their rise?

•(1045)

Mr. Ian Moss: It's certainly not unique to winter sport. I've worked in a number of summer sports that have a strong Asian connection. Certainly I've seen a very strong corporate connection in Asia. A number of teams or sports are adopted, if you like, by the corporations. Samsung is a good example, from Korea; they're in many.

I think it speaks to what we said earlier, that we have to harness a number of opportunities in Canada. We can't just do the same old, same old, in terms of always relying on government for funding.

We see it happening in Europe, and it's certainly strong in Asia.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Mr. Lapointe, if you have one question...

Ms. Mathysen, then, you have about a minute plus.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to say thank you to Skate Canada for coming to my city of London, Ontario, and recognizing the world-famous Ilderton Skating Club.

Ms. Manley, I remember your skate. I didn't know I could hold my breath for that long. It was just amazing.

We've heard from witnesses that women outperform men. I mean, that's easy, but my question is about the funding. Is it equitable? Is the women's side of things getting the same kind of support as the men's side in terms of the support they need?

Ms. Elizabeth Manley-Theobald: I can really only speak on behalf of figure skating, but it is equal in our sport. That's because we do have team events that consist of a female and a male together. There wouldn't be the girl without the guy, and there wouldn't be the guy without the girl. So the funding is very equal and very shared, and the responsibility on Skate Canada's part is to treat that equally.

I think that's why, for the first time in many years, we're having the success in all the disciplines—because they're being equally supported.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: That's an excellent point. Thank you for that.

Mr. Daniel Thompson: May I make one comment, or...no?

The Chair: You can have 15 seconds.

Mr. Daniel Thompson: Okay.

I think we do need to stimulate more, to get more boys into figure skating. Our CanSkate program is 75% girls and 25% boys. We want to attract more boys to the sport of skating.

The Chair: All right. That's the last word.

Thank you very much to our witnesses.

The meeting is adjourned.

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